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Abstract Title: An Ethical Analysis: Vulnerable Populations During a Public Health Emergency

Abstract: Historical precedent demonstrates the potential for misuse of public health policies against vulnerable populations during public health emergencies. Vulnerable populations are identifiable sub-populations whose characteristics and/or needs render them susceptible to harm from a public health intervention; they include children, the elderly, immigrants (whether due to non-citizen status or due to language barriers), the physically and mentally disabled, and ethnic minorities. Currently, vulnerable populations have minimal protection (against harm from the intervention) in the event of a public health emergency. This paper analyzes the ethical arguments for developing policies to protect vulnerable populations' interests during an emergency public health intervention. This poster considers the ethical dilemmas posed by vulnerable populations during a public health emergency. It undertakes an ethical analysis of the collective interests of vulnerable populations during a public health emergency and concludes with an ethically supported proposal for addressing vulnerable populations' interests during a public health crisis. Public health situations require an ethical analysis that differs from bioethics. Vulnerable populations pose a different ethical dilemma for the use of public health authority than the individual's civil rights challenges traditionally considered by public health scholars. An emergency public health intervention that does not adequately address the needs of vulnerable populations resulting in significantly reduced effectiveness and in disproportionate burdens on vulnerable populations is not ethically justified. Instead, what is needed is proactive policies to address vulnerable populations' interests during a public health emergency are ethically justified for a public health intervention.